

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN IMMEDIATE

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FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH GAMBIAN OFFICIALS

REF: DAKAR 381

1. YOU MAY DRAW UPON THE FOLLOWING AS YOU SEE FIT. THE PACE OF THE MPLA'S ADVANCE IN NORTHERN ANGOLA HAS SLOWED BUT BY NO MEANS STOPPED. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT FNLA ATTEMPTS TO FORM A NEW DEFENSIVE LINE NORTH OF AMBRIZETE WILL BE EFFECTIVE. ZAIRE HAS GIVEN NO INDICATION THAT IT IS PREPARED TO COMMIT ADDITIONAL MILITARY RESOURCES OF ITS OWN TO TRY TO SALVAGE THE FNLA'S POSITION. IT SEEMS LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT FNLA WILL REVERT TO INSURGENT TACTICS IN THE NORTH IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE MPLA FROM CONSOLIDATING

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ITS POSITION.

2. THE IMPACT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DECISION TO DISENGAGE FROM ANGOLA IS ALREADY BEING FELT. FOLLOWING THE FNLA'S VIRTUAL COLLAPSE IN THE NORTH, MPLA AND CUBAN MILITARY RESOURCES ARE NOW BEING SHIFTED TO THE SOUTHERN FRONT, WITH THE RESULT THAT UNITA'S PREVIOUSLY STABLE DEFENSE LINE HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY BREACHED IN THREE KEY AREAS.

(A) ON THE COAST, MPLA AND CUBAN TROOPS HAVE OCCUPIED THE PORT OF NOVO REDONDO AND ARE PREPARING TO ATTACK THE RAIL-PORT COMPLEX AT LOBITO-BENGUELA.

(B) INLAND FROM THE COAST, UNITA HAS BEEN FORCED OUT OF ITS FORWARD MILITARY HEADQUARTERS NEAR SANTA COMBA, AND MPLA AND CUBAN FORCES REPORTEDLY ARE ADVANCING SOUTH ALONG THE MAIN ROAD TO HUAMBO (NOVA LISBOA). PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT UNITA AND FNLA HAVE MOVED THEIR POLITICAL "CAPITAL" FROM HUAMBO TO SILVA PORTO BECAUSE OF THE GROWING MILITARY THREAT TO THE FORMER.

(C) IN EASTERN ANGOLA, HOWEVER, THE MPLA IS ENCOUNTERING CONSIDERABLE UNITA RESISTANCE IN ITS EFFORT TO SEIZE LUSO.

3. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT UNITA WILL BE ABLE TO RESIST FOR LONG THE COMBINATION OF SOPHISTICATED SOVIET WEAPONRY AND LARGE NUMBERS OF CUBAN TROOPS, WHO NOW NUMBER BETWEEN 8,000 AND 10,000. NEVERTHELESS, IF UNITA IS ABLE TO STAGE AN ORDERLY WITHDRAWAL TO MORE DEFENSEABLE POSITIONS FURTHER SOUTH, IT WILL STILL CONSTITUTE A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO THE MPLA'S CONTROL OF SOUTHERN ANGOLA.

4. CONCEIVABLY, UNITA MAY BE ABLE TO USE THIS THREAT AS LEVERAGE IN INSISTING UPON SOME KIND OF POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WITH MPLA. UNITA PRESIDENT JONAS SAVIMBI HAS REITERATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE, AND THERE IS CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION AMONG KEY AFRICAN STATES, SUCH AS TANZANIA, ZAMBIA AND KENYA. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE REPORTS THAT SOME PREVIOUSLY UNCOMMITTED AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS ARE WAVERING TOWARD RECOGNITION

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OF THE MPLA BECAUSE OF ITS IMPROVED MILITARY PROSPECTS, THERE HAVE BEEN NO NEW RECOGNITIONS SINCE ETHIOPIA'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON JANUARY 15, AND THE TOTAL REMAINS AT 23. THE MPLA, HOWEVER, HAS YET TO INDICATE THAT IT IS READY TO ABANDON ITS PURSUIT OF AN OUTRIGHT MILITARY VICTORY. 5. OUR POSITION ON ANGOLA REMAINS UNCHANGED. WE APPRECIATE PRESIDENT JAWARA'S SUPPORT AT OAU FOR A BALANCED SOLUTION TO PROBLEM AND NOW THAT SOUTH AFRICA

WITHDRAWAL HAS COME ABOUT WE WOULD HOPE GOTG COULD CONTINUE TO HOLD ITS POSITION ALONG WITH OTHER MODERATE STATES IN AFRICA.

6. FYI: HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTED ON JANUARY 27 323 TO 99 TO SUPPORT THE TUNNEY AMENDMENT. THE SECRETARY IS GOING BEFORE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE THURSDAY JANUARY 29 TO RESTATE OUR POSITION. KISSINGER

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